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THE PAY OF COLLEGE WOMEN.

BY FRANCES M. ABBOTT.

THE woman problem and the industrial problem are subjects of paramount interest to this generation. When the two are interwoven the interest of the combined problem is equalled only by the ignorance concerning it. The Association of Collegiate Alumnae, numbering nearly 2,000 women who have received college degrees, has just issued a valuable compendium of statistics on the "Compensation in Certain Occupations of Women Who have received College or Other Special Training." Like all the publications of the A. C. A., this pamphlet is distinguished by admirable thoroughness of compilation and fairness of statement. It is my purpose to put the facts into such form that they may be readily assimilated by the general mind.

Before beginning, I wish to warn my readers not to repose too much confidence in these statistics, carefully prepared though they be. Anyone who has ever conducted a written examination in school knows something of the variety of answers that a question can evoke from the human mind. When the minds are mature and highly trained, and the answer depends upon original thought and not upon a previously learned lesson, it seems as if the permutations were infinite. One might almost say that no inquiry ever strikes two people exactly alike. Again, as every collator knows to his sorrow, no matter how intelligent and responsible are the persons to whom a list of inquiries is sent, half of the forms will not be returned, and of the other half a goodly number will have the blanks imperfectly filled out. The marking system as commonly practised in school and college seems to me not less fatuous than the minute fractions of *per cent.* that are elaborately worked out of necessarily imperfect *data.*

Having placed all statistical information in the limbo of uncertainty where it properly belongs, I wish expressly to say that the statements in this paper will have no value five years, possibly two years, hence, for woman's opportunities, and, moreover, industrial conditions in general are changing as rapidly as scientific inventions are being patented.

The object of the A. C. A. in its recent investigation was to find out why, and to what extent an inequality of wages is paid to men and women performing the same kind of work. Circulars were sent out to members of the A. C. A. engaged chiefly in professional, mercantile, or technical pursuits; but the pamphlet says that the inquiries were not in all cases restricted to *alumnæ*, but include in some instances women, not college-bred, engaged in occupations requiring special training. We are led to infer that the proportion of non-college women is small; but it is to be regretted that the exact figures have not been given, as it leads to confusion, both about the kind of work done by graduates and the compensation they receive.

The number of schedules returned in response to this investigation was 451. They represent all parts of the country—90 from New York, 61 from California, 59 from Massachusetts, 55 from Minnesota, 44 from Connecticut, 40 from Rhode Island, 39 from Indiana, 14 from Illinois, and the remainder (153) scattered among other States. The total number of occupations given is 66, but many of these are very nearly allied. There are 169 teachers, the largest number in any single employment, 47 librarians and women engaged in library work, 28 stenographers, 22 nurses and superintendents of nursing, 19 journalists, including editors and reporters, and 19 clerks without specification as to the kind of service. To show the variety of occupations represented, it may be mentioned that there is an actress, advertising agent, assistant in the National Herbarium, assistant on dictionary, assistant in observatory, astronomer, car recorder, draughtswoman, insurance broker, insurance solicitor, writer of advertisements, reviser of patents, water analyst, beside several proof-readers, telegraph operators, bookkeepers, and artists.

In looking over this list one is at once struck by the absence of physicians. This is probably due to the fact that this investigation does not consider independent workers, but only those employed by some firm or institution. The earnings of independ-

ent workers depend so much upon individual qualities that it is little use to try to classify them.

It may be mentioned in passing, however, that the profession of medicine is probably the most lucrative, as it is certainly one of the most useful and honorable in which women can engage. It has always been a matter of surprise to me that more college women have not undertaken it. Out of a total of 1,945 members in the last register of the A. C. A., but 35, or less than two per cent. write M. D. after their names. So far as I can learn, the woman physician in general practice in the smaller cities receives precisely the same fee as a man. In fact, the fee for an ordinary office or house visit is usually fixed by custom, and the young physician receives the same pay as the older one. The charges of specialists are graded by their reputation; and in the large cities all doctors' fees depend upon the quarter of the town they live in. The income of an established physician (male or female) in any of our cities of 15,000 or more inhabitants cannot be less than several thousand dollars yearly, and though the living expenses (house and horses) must be considerable, the physician can probably make a better financial showing than almost any other woman worker. The profession requires a long and expensive preparatory training, but one would suppose there are plenty of college women who would not be daunted by that.

To return to our tables, we find that 338 of the total number of respondents have some other remunerative occupation besides their main work; 74 have no other, while 39 make no answer. This seems rather surprising, especially as we immediately learn that in 350 cases (about 78 per cent. of the whole) the wages derived from the main occupation are sufficient for the support of the worker. It is further interesting to know that 117, or nearly 26 per cent., report that they are occupied with domestic cares besides their main work. The compilers note that this diversification of industrial pursuits seems to indicate that the burden of the woman is probably heavier than that of her male fellow-worker.

The table most interesting to the general reader is that relating to salaries. There is some surprise that these are given by the monthly instead of the yearly rate. The latter estimate is more intelligible, and also more accurate, because some occupations, mainly teaching, engage one's time for only nine months

of the year. In the absence of any information to the contrary, we may suppose that the teacher's yearly income is divided into twelve parts, in order to classify it with the salary of workers whose occupation continues all the year round.

By consulting the tables we find that 144 respondents, the largest number in any one class, are paid a salary between \$50 and \$75 a month, *i. e.*, from \$600 to \$900 a year. On either side of them we find two equal groups of 88 each. One of these groups receives between \$25 and \$50 a month (\$300 to \$600 a year) and the other receives between \$75 and \$100 a month (\$900 to \$1,200 a year). There are 73 who receive between \$100 and \$200 a month (\$1,200 to \$2,500 a year); two who are paid between \$200 and \$300 a month (\$2,400 to \$3,600 a year); and then comes the glorious news that two women receive over \$300 a month (\$3,600 a year).

This last fact ought to give a momentary gleam of happiness to every woman who reads these lines. There are two college women in this country whose services are adjudged by the firm or corporation which employs them as worth over \$3,600 a year. One of these women is classed as a teacher (she may be a college president), and one as an insurance solicitor. Under cover of their brilliant record we can slip in the fact that six women acknowledge that they receive less than \$25 a month (\$300 a year). This is such a manifestly inadequate sum that we are forced to conclude that the whole time of the workers is not paid for, either because they are learning the business or because the business does not require many hours a day. These six workers are classified as follows: Three in library employment, one typesetter, one stenographer, and one assistant postmaster.

To recapitulate: There are 238 who receive less than \$75 a month, and 165 who receive from \$75 to \$300 and over. Perhaps the profession of teaching deserves to be especially considered. Of the 161 teachers who reply to this question, 24 receive under \$50 a month; 64 receive between \$50 and \$75; 42 receive between \$75 and \$100; 29 between \$100 and \$200; one between \$200 and \$300, and one over \$300. There is but one other woman who receives between \$200 and \$300 a month, and she is an editor.

A salary of between \$100 and \$200 a month ought to support a single woman in comfort. Besides the 29 teachers there are 44

other women who receive this amount. Nine are engaged in library work, four as editors or reporters, four as nurses or superintendents of nursing, four as clerks, three as stenographers, four as typesetters (is not this unexpected?), and one each as artist, assistant in the National Herbarium, assistant curator, assistant on dictionary, assistant postmaster, astronomer, bookkeeper, bookkeeper and cashier, examiner of bonds, manager, telegraph manager, stenographer and bookkeeper, stenographer and typewriter, combination stenography, teaching and newspaper work, typewriter, writer of advertisements, reviser of patents. While about 38 per cent. of the whole number of respondents are teachers, about 40 per cent. of those earning over \$100 a month are teachers.

It is often asked why the majority of self-supporting, educated women continue to enter the profession of teaching. There seems to be good financial reason for it, notwithstanding the enormous competition. Other reasons are that a college graduate can undertake teaching without special training and that it offers large vacations, which are particularly acceptable to women. I have sometimes been told by teachers that the only redeeming feature of their work is the vacation, also that every day of it has to be utilized to get strength enough to go through with the next term. Still, a vacation gives a certain amount of independence. With past social conditions any woman engaging in active work has been almost obliged to forego social life during her period of work. The hours of labor are not those of society. Perhaps for this reason more than any other have cultivated women hesitated to undertake regular employment. They may have liked the work; they may have needed the money; but they were unwilling to sacrifice so much of what makes life worth living. There are signs of coming change. Club life seems to be reforming society along new lines. The constantly increasing army of working women of culture and social ability is compelling readjustments in our ways of thinking and forms of living.

The investigation asked one question, to which for some reason four-ninths of the respondents failed to reply. This is: How does the pay of men performing the same grade of work differ from yours? Of the 250 women who make reply, 150 get less pay than men for the same work, 95 receive the same pay, and 5 women actually receive more pay. The only comment we

can make on this is that the facts are not nearly so bad as we had feared. The cheering information that five women receive more pay than men for the same work deserves analysis. One is employed in a bureau of charities, one is an editor or journalist, one is a proof-reader, and two are actually teachers !

It is often said that men should receive more pay than women because they have families to support. A teacher said to me some years ago that she did not believe there was a woman over thirty years of age earning her own living who did not have some one dependent upon her. She added : "These family obligations are not a matter of choice with women as with men. Men usually incur them by their own marriage; women find families thrust upon them through the marriage of some one else, perhaps of their own parents, years before they were born." Of the 379 women who answer this question about family support, 157 or about 41 per cent. aid in supporting others, while 222 or over 58 per cent. do not. The number of unhampered workers would seem to indicate that many young women, or women of well-to-do parents, are engaged in gainful occupations.

The committee of the A. C. A. were evidently determined to leave no side of the problem of woman's work unturned. It is sometimes alleged that women do not remain continuously in one employment or remain long enough to gain proficiency. There were 333 replies on this subject. Of the whole number of respondents, 214, nearly two-thirds, had followed but one kind of employment since beginning work. They had been at work on an average 7 years and 8 months. There were 88 who had two kinds of work in which they had been engaged 5 years and 4 months each; 19 had had three kinds of work for an average period of 4 years and 8 months; 9 had had four kinds; 2 had had five kinds, while 1 confesses to the extraordinary versatility which enabled her to perform eight kinds of work in succession for an average period of 7 months each. So far as this evidence is worth anything, it shows that the majority of women, when they have once chosen a vocation, stick to it.

In order to throw all the light possible on the reason for the inequality of male and female wages a number of employers were asked for their opinion. Replies were received from 104 employers, 25 from Massachusetts, 25 from California, 15 from Rhode Island, 14 from New York and the remainder from other

States. In their establishments 7,794 persons were employed, 4,697 men and 3,097 women. It must be borne in mind that a large part of the female help could not have been college-women, though it is to be supposed that firms employing college-women were consulted whenever possible.

Of the 90 employers who replied to the question on the comparative value of the services of men and women, 46 said that they were equally valuable, 29 said the services of women were less valuable, 7 made indefinite replies, while 8 answered, "On some work, yes; on other work, no." If this is not all that could be hoped for, it is probably a better showing than could have been made ten years ago. When asked for the reason why women, in general, receive less pay than men for the same work, 67 replied as follows: 29 attribute it to the effect of supply and demand; 21 to physical and mental differences or difference in general ability, while 17 allege custom as an excuse.

I imagine that many of my readers, if they have had interest enough to follow my statements thus far, have done so for the sake of getting a definite answer to the question: Does it pay to send a girl to college? Many a well-to-do father, whose family is living comfortably and spending all he earns, and many a hard-worked mother, who wishes her daughter to have some easier and more remunerative occupation than herself, are anxiously pondering this question. After many years of investigation and observation I can give but an oracular answer. If pecuniary return be the chief motive for sending a girl to college, I should say the venture is as risky as any other business investment.

The necessary expenses at a woman's college are about \$500 a year. The charges for board and tuition at Vassar and Wellesley are \$400 a year; at Smith and Bryn Mawr, where there is greater variety in the accommodations, the average price is about the same. One hundred dollars is a reasonable sum for books, class and club dues, and necessary incidentals. Clothes and travelling expenses depend upon the individual. I have been told by a woman of wide experience, and my own observation confirms it, that a college woman is doing well if, upon graduation, she can obtain a place to teach for \$500 a year without board. A teacher is obliged to dress decently, to live in a respectable quarter of the town, to attend an occasional concert, lecture, or play, and she

ought not to be prohibited from buying books now and then, or taking a trip during vacation. She must manage well if she can do all this, even in a small city, on \$500 a year. Of course, unless she is a young woman in comfortable circumstances, boarding at home, she hopes for speedy promotion ; but it does not always come. I know of women who have taken advanced degrees at American and foreign universities (and this class is small enough to make its services valuable), who are filling subordinate positions in schools at less than \$1,000 a year, and are unable to get any farther. Still, let us always remember that there are two women in this country who are paid a salary of over \$300 a month.

It is becoming the fashion to send girls to college. The institutions are filled to overflowing, and at least three of them turn away hundreds of applicants every year for lack of room. A professor of chemistry at a woman's college, asking for enlarged laboratory facilities, said recently : " I am not begging this for myself. The pressure comes from outside. What can we do when well-prepared students insist upon coming ? " There is scarcely a man's institution of any importance in the length and breadth of our land that does not admit the feminine mind, singly or in numbers, to some form of co-education, though in many instances the trustees are shy about acknowledging it.

The question, " Ought Woman to Learn the Alphabet ? " which Thomas Wentworth Higginson discussed so wittily a quarter of a century ago, is happily settled, at least in this country. It has been proven that the majority of maidens take the baccalaureate degree without injury to health or manners. It has even been proven that a diploma is not necessarily a bar to their matrimonial prospects. Socially, a college woman is almost sure to have opportunities open to her, though sometimes she may be so overworked as to be unable to take advantage of them. For a rich girl a college training offers delightful possibilities. Howells says that we are getting to that state when our women are almost the only class left who have any use for what was once considered the education of a gentleman. Let us hope that some time, and the signs point that way, they may be thought worthy to receive the wages of the workingman.

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